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GEOGRAPHIC INTELLIGENCE REPORT

GEOGRAPHIC FEASIBILITY OF ALGERIAN PARTITION

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GEOGRAPHIC FEASIBILITY OF ALGERIAN PARTITION

I. Conclusions

There is no sound basis for the partition of Algeria between the French and the native population. Accordingly, no recommendations for partition lines are made. Partition between the Berber-speaking and Arabic-speaking natives may be possible, but no economically viable unit would result. Therefore, no recommendations for partition between the natives are made.

Although several methods of partition were examined, the pattern of human and natural resources is such that sound results could not be expected. Algeria is an agricultural country in which the explosive rate of population increase continues to outstrip all increases in agricultural income. If the French were restricted to the cities, their land was expropriated and redistributed, and the natives were allowed to control the agricultural system, there is strong evidence that two results would follow:

- (1) The gap between agricultural income and population would become wider.
- (2) The French, whose hold on the cities is already weak, would lose control of the water supply and thereby of the cities.

Although partition based on expropriation of French-owned land may have merit as a political expedient, it has no logical economic or demographic

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basis. In any case, terrorism is now so effective that partition of what is left may be an academic question.

II. Possible Ways To Partition Algeria -- An Evaluation

A. By Terrain and Climate

The best single economic area in Algeria today, the Tell, is delimited naturally on the basis of terrain and climate. This area, located between the mountains and the Mediterranean Sea, contains 75 percent of the people of Algeria on one-sixteenth of the land. Although the French rural population is greater here than in any other part of Algeria, natives predominate in the Tell. There is no way to partition the Tell, and any partition of Algeria that would be meaningful to the revolting native element would involve the Tell.

Conversely, any partition of Algeria that would be meaningful to the French would have to give them control of the great hydraulic projects that supply the cities with power and water and the farms with irrigation water. Because of their very nature, these projects had to be located in the mountains -- mountains which are often under or potentially subject to rebel control. To give the French the major cities and not the mountains that control the power and water supply would be short-sighted. Rebel activity against these installations is evidence of the indivisible relationship between city and mountains in Algeria.

Terrain and climate have contributed to the present administrative pattern in Algeria, particularly in separating the present departments

of Bone, Constantine, Algiers, and Oran from the rest of Algeria; these departments are a part of Metropolitan France. From the standpoint of economic geography and security, the southern limits of these departments are sound. These limits serve to separate usable land in its widest possible economic meaning from wasteland.

B. Along Ethnic Lines

It is usually pointed out that the French are primarily city dwellers, so the question is asked, why not partition Algeria in such a manner that urban zones would be allotted to them and the rest of the land to the natives? The chief flaw in this reasoning is that such a division would by no means guarantee to the French control over the cities. The increase in native population to the present figure of 8 million has produced a large native urban population, partly as a result of a high birthrate in the cities and partly from migration to the cities. Consequently, natives would still outnumber the French in the cities. The only effective way to guarantee French control of the cities, in terms of numbers of people, would be to remove many urban natives and prevent others from entering the cities. This would hardly eliminate the natives' reasons for agitation against the French.

The major Berber areas are sufficiently large and ethnically cohesive to form viable political entities. The Berber society, with its core of tightly knit villages, seems to have survived better than the comparatively loosely knit Arab society with its tendencies towards

monarchical forms that are fundamentally unsuited to modern conditions. The Berber villages, on the other hand, form a suitable foundation for a society organized along modern political lines.

C. By Agricultural Patterns

Partition by agricultural patterns is not realistic. If partition were to restrict the French to the cities and expropriate their agricultural land, the present pattern of population distribution would merely be accentuated and the income-producing ability of the agricultural system would be ruined. The rural Arab is engaged principally in the cultivation of wheat and barley by primitive methods and in the raising of sheep. The care and labor that enters into the cultivation of fruit and olive trees and into truck gardening is apparently still repugnant to him; the prohibition of wine by Islam has tended to prevent him from cultivating the grape.

The Berbers, in contrast, have a more diversified agriculture, are more solidly sedentary, and form densely populated communities. Berber sedentary characteristics are evidenced by the fact that regions of Berber speech and of arboriculture, particularly the cultivation of the fig and olive, have coincided since the earliest times. Though some wheat and barley is grown in these regions, the terrain is too rugged to permit any great production of cereal crops. Moreover, most Berber land is so densely populated that the basic problem, overpopulation, would remain after partition. The Kabylie region (a Berber area)

is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. It also is the chief source of Algerian workers who emigrate to France, and entire villages exist on the small remittances these workers are able to send back.

III. Patterns of Human and Natural Resources

A. Population

Algeria has about 9.5 million people, mostly Muslims. Europeans number over 1 million and are mostly French, many with a heritage of several generations in Algeria. Of the 9.5 million people, nearly 9 million are concentrated in approximately 9 percent of the area, the four departments of northern Algeria -- Bône, Constantine, Algiers, and Oran. The annual rate of population increase for all of Algeria is high (2.8 percent), but the Muslim birth rate is twice that of the European element. Under French control the population of Algeria has increased from 1 million to 8 million natives during the last century.

The French in Algeria are primarily city dwellers. In the highly rural departments of Bône and Constantine, of a total of 3,425,000 people, only 200,000 are Europeans. One can drive for scores of miles without seeing a European, and this was true in pre-terrorist days as well as today. French farms in these departments and many other rural areas are tiny European islands in a sea of Muslims. The French agricultural effort is therefore easily vulnerable to any hostile Muslim acts.

The natives of Algeria comprise two distinct linguistic groups -- Berber and Arab. In general, the Berber population is confined to the more rugged mountain areas, is sedentary or seminomadic within sharply defined limits, and still observes a customary law which, even in the most important Berber center, has never been supplanted by Koranic law. In contrast, the nonurban Arab population generally inhabits the plains and the high plateaus and, at best, is loosely attached to the soil; large numbers still live in tents.

The great majority of the Arab-speaking population is composed of Berbers who, over the centuries, have been Arabized. The reverse process, the Berberizing of Arabic-speaking people, is comparatively rare and has taken place only on a limited scale. Apparently the Berber language is in slow regression, though it holds on the people who speak it is still tenacious; even in bilingual areas the language used in the family is Berber. The fact that Berber remains an unwritten language, the influence of Islam, the spread of commerce, and increased Berber migration to the cities have all contributed toward reducing the proportion of the Berber-speaking population in relation to the Arabic-speaking population. At the same time, however, French state-sponsored schools have been widely established in Berber areas, and French has become a serious rival to Arabic as a second language.

The linguistic predominance of Arabic over Berber-speaking peoples in the cities is likely to continue. Berber is not and has not been an

urban language since remote antiquity; the only two urban centers where Berber is the principal language are Tizi-Ouzou and Bougie. All of the remaining cities are Arabic-speaking, but the people speak a dialect distinct from that of most of the countryside. The centers of Arab culture are so strong that the surrounding countryside has been Arabized.

Because nearly a third of the population of Algeria is Berber-speaking, any partition of Algeria would be wise to take the Berbers into account. Even if Algeria fell completely into Arab hands, control of the Berbers would still remain a problem. The Berber-speaking population is concentrated in the eastern and central parts of the four metropolitan departments and is almost lacking in the western parts of the country. Observers have long noted the coincidence between the areas of Berber population and those of the most difficult terrain, many of which today are rebel-infested. The areas occupied by large Berber-speaking groups in the region south of Constantine correspond fairly closely with the mountains of the Aures and the Nememcha. The concentration of Berbers known as the Kabylie, between Algiers and Djidjelli, centering around Tizi-Ouzou and Bougie, corresponds with the mountains of the Djurdjura, the Bibans, and the Bahors. The Berbers on the coast west of Algiers between Cherchel and Tenes coincide with the highest parts of the coastal range known as the mountains of Miliana.

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Scattered islands of Berber speech stretching from the area south of Algiers to the Moroccan border correspond with the highest portions of the Mitidja Atlas and the Ouarsenis Range, as well as with parts of the mountains of Tlemcen. Small groups of Berber-speaking peoples are also found in some of the most inhospitable regions of the Sahara Desert.

B. Agriculture

The agricultural wealth of Algeria is sharply limited to the north, particularly to the fertile plains and valleys near the coast where many of the cash crops are grown. Most of the good land is owned by the French. They almost exclusively grow the most valuable crop, wine grapes, as well as the best grain, fruits, and cattle -- thus producing the bulk of the agricultural income of the country. Altogether, wine, cereals, fruit, and vegetable crops account for over three-fourths of the total agricultural income. Animal production supplies only one-fourth of the total agricultural income. There are over 9 million sheep and goats in Algeria, or more than 1 per native.

Under French control the cultivable area of Algeria has been greatly extended, but this has been accomplished principally by drainage and improvement in the distribution of existing waters. Such improvements, however, have not been able to keep pace with the explosive rate of population increase. For example, over a 4-year period (1950

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through 1953), agricultural income increased 5 percent, but the population increased 7 percent. The gap is considered especially serious because of Algeria's dependence upon agriculture. Nearly one-third of Algeria's gross national income comes from agricultural production, and the most numerous industries are those that process agricultural produce. Approximately 78 percent of the total population depends directly upon agriculture for a living.

C. Forestry

Forests occupy over 5 million acres. Most of this land is state-owned brushland located in the drier mountainous parts of Algeria. French reforestation efforts are often resented by the nomadic Arabs because much land is taken out of grazing, use of it is controlled, or it is leased. The major forest product is cork.

D. Water Resources

No other resource directly affects the economic well-being of Algeria as much as water. Unfortunately the water supply is limited. The accompanying map illustrates some of the hard facts about the relationship between water and people in Algeria. Of the 21 cities of 10,000 or more population, only 3 are south of the 8-inch rainfall line and only 2 others are south of the 16-inch rainfall line. Of these 5, one is on the 16-inch line, and another is only a short distance from it. With two exceptions, the existing dams are north of the 16-inch

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line. In general, eastern Algeria receives more rainfall than western Algeria, and the latter includes more irrigated areas. Dams and water spreading make possible the irrigation of nearly a quarter of a million acres; it is estimated that the water supply is sufficient to irrigate only an additional 100,000 acres.

E. Minerals

Exploitable mineral deposits in Algeria are limited, and minerals are not being found in quantity. Many sectors of the mining industry are operating at substantial losses. At best, many years of exploration and development lie ahead before there can be even a modest realization of Algeria's undeveloped resources. The most important mineral export is iron ore, which is found in the department of Bône. Next in importance are the two phosphate mines, also in the department of Bône. Algerian production of coal and petroleum has remained relatively unimportant, and exploitation can be carried on only by virtue of heavy subsidies. The chief coal deposit is at Columb-Bechar, far to the south. The chief oilfield at Oued Gueterini lacks sizable reserves.

Any minerals discovered in the Sahara would have to be extremely valuable to overcome the excessive cost of transporting them to the coast. The transferring of possible oil areas in the Sahara Desert of Algeria to French West Africa would not change the pattern of accessibility and marketing.

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IV. Impact of Terrorism on the Human and Natural Resource Pattern

Inasmuch as terrorism concentrates on those features that are a mark of French presence, the patterns outlined above are being changed.

In the economic sphere, terrorism is threatening to break down the economy of Algeria. The sabotage of the transportation system is spreading and damaging installations of a permanent nature. The mining industry is particularly hard hit. Iron pyrites are no longer produced in Algeria, and the industry at large has ceased development work, as well as the replacement and modernization of capital equipment.

Agriculture in much of the area east of Algiers is becoming virtually impossible, with roughly one-third of the farms in the department of Constantine already destroyed. Destruction figures are approaching the fantastic. For example, 35,000 grape vines were cut in one night at one place. The increased tempo of destruction is evidenced by the cutting of 350 orange trees in August 1955; in September 1955 the figure rose to 5,100; and in 1956, on one night alone, 6,000 orange trees were cut. Some time ago estimates of the number of fruit trees destroyed stood at 40,000, and the number of cattle killed or stolen amounted to 10,000. At least 100 tractors have been destroyed, as well as thousands of tons of forage and straw.

The most important forest industry in Algeria is cork production,

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and this industry is in a state of liquidation. Stripping operations are impossible, forest-cork depots have been burned down, and the terrorists have commenced to burn cork depots and manufacturing plants in the ports of Bone, Bougie, and Algiers. The largest companies are thinking of transferring all their processing to France. This would have a disastrous effect on future employment, prices, and production in the cork trade.

As serious as these depredations are to the functioning of the Algerian economy, they are merely a portent of more serious destruction. Possibly the most effective way for the rebels to drive the French out of Algeria is to damage the impressive hydraulic projects the French have built. Such a campaign would interfere with irrigation and electric power.

By their very nature the hydraulic projects are located in the mountains -- the places most vulnerable to rebel attack. Bougie, Phillipville, and Collo are regularly deprived of water whenever the terrorists cut the aqueducts from the mountain reservoirs. Recently Algeria's second city, Oran, was short of water for some days following the dynamiting of a section of the 70-mile-long aqueduct from the Beni-Bahdel Dam. About a month ago, French forces claimed to have broken up an organization that had planned to blow up the Oued Fodda Dam, which irrigates one of the richest farming areas in Algeria. Before

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the month of May 1956 had ended, the rebels severely damaged the dam near Boghni, as well as the water ducts of its neighboring hydroelectric plant.

The city of Algiers obtains an important part of its electric-power supply from hydroelectric plants in the Petite Kabylie Mountains, one of the areas of greatest disturbance; high-tension lines also cross the notorious Grande Kabylie Mountains. Work on the massive Oued Djendjen hydroelectric project in the Petite Kabylie, the greatest project of its type in Algeria, is reported to be greatly handicapped because constant protection is needed for all work parties.

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